

PRESERVING HISTORY: Trish Ramsay, is the former president of the Kenwood Elementary PTA, which tried to save the Dice House in 1989.



RAUL RUBIERA / Miami Herald

Kendall home's historic designation challenged

By CHARLES STROUSE
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Helen Prenitzer has lived in Kendall for 28 years. The Kansas native moved to a small wooden house near U.S. 1 and Southwest 98th Street in the 1960s: "It was just like country out here," she recalls.

"But now we're leaving all the old things behind," Prenitzer said. "There's just nothing left of the way Kendall use to be, even 20 years ago."

Prenitzer and some of her neighbors plan next week to try to preserve the Dice House at 9840 SW 77th Ave. The house was designated a county historic site in 1989 because it was built by David Dice, a popular storekeeper and one of Kendall's first residents.

Owner, neighbors at odds over future use

A county report says the house was built in the early 1920s, which would make it one of Kendall's first homes, but a representative of owner Stanley Simmons says it wasn't built until the '30s.

Simmons will ask Metro's Historic Preservation Board Wednesday to remove the historic designation granted in 1989. The house is on land zoned for business use. If board members remove the designation, the house can be demolished or modified to make way for commercial development.

Joseph Aguilera, Simmons' partner and agent, said the designation has created an economic hardship by discouraging potential buyers.

Buyers have offered as much as \$360,000 for the house, purchased in 1982 for \$150,000, but have withdrawn their offers when they learned the house could not be torn down, Aguilera said.

"The Simmons family are retired and they want to sell the property, but no one will buy it with the designation," he said.

County historic preservation authorities say the application to remove historic designation is the first in 10 years. About 50 structures in Dade have been listed as historic, said Margo Ammidown, acting director of Metro's historic preservation division.

According to the county's report on the property, Dice

moved to the area about 1917 and ran a store not far from the house. He was a popular man who owned one of Dade's first phones.

"Some people say he was unofficial Mayor of Kendall," Ammidown said.

Parents from nearby Kenwood Elementary School tried to save the house in 1989, said Trish Ramsay, former president of Kenwood Elementary PTA. They offered to move the house to school land near the school, but owner refused the offer, Ramsay said.

Aguilera said the house would fall apart if it were moved.

"This house is the last one of its type in Kendall, so it should be saved," said Ramsay. "This area is growing so fast we need to do something now to preserve it for our children."